

Gambling firm hits back at Jowell

Online gambling firm ThePool.com has hit back at culture secretary Tessa Jowell's criticism of its ad campaign, saying that 16- and 17-year-olds can bet legally and if the minister does not like it she should change the law.

ThePool.com defended its ad campaign, which has been pulled by the Advertising Standards Authority, as well as being branded „utterly reprehensible“ by Ms Jowell, saying that it „did not believe highlighting that 16- or 17-year-olds can bet legally is socially irresponsible“.

„The law clearly states that people of 16 or 17 can bet on pools, as they can on the National Lottery and in fact purchase premium bonds,“ the company said in a statement. „If the secretary of state feels that the law is wrong she should take action to change it.“

It also expressed „surprise“ at the actions of Lord Borrie, the ASA chairman, who took the unusual step of personally ordering the ads to be withdrawn before an investigation was conducted.

ThePool.com said it was contacted yesterday by the ASA over concerns about its advertising and as a result „we immediately amended the ad to remove explicit references to the fact that 16-year-olds are legally able to take part in pool bets“.

It added that it had also agreed that no further leaflets would be printed or distributed.

The ASA said it will also investigate whether the ads breached clauses in its code stating that advertising of gaming services should not encourage excessive gambling, exploit the young or immature or be prepared in a socially irresponsible

manner.

Pool gambling is legal for anyone over 16, but all print advertisements appearing in paid-for space must comply with its non-broadcast advertising code.

ThePool.com said that it wanted to stay within the non-broadcast regulatory code of the ASA and cooperate with the investigation, but added that it does not „seek to promote gambling to those aged 16 or 17, nor does it seek to market irresponsibly“.

The ad campaign, which has appeared in London freesheet Metro, a men's lifestyle magazine and as a promotional leaflet, features scantily clad women and lines such as „Why wait ,til 18? Bet at 16“ and „Make lots of money when your friends join too“.